



Chris Hartcher MP
Minister for Resources and Energy
Special Minister of State and
Minister for the Central Coast

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE NO. 5
BUDGET ESTIMATES 2013**

Portfolio Areas of –

RESOURCES AND ENERGY, SPECIAL MINISTER OF STATE, CENTRAL COAST

The Hon. Robert Brown (Chair),

Please find attached the following documents relating to the Budget Estimates hearing for Resources and Energy, Special Minister of State and the Central Coast.

- Answers to questions highlighted in the transcript
- Answers to further QON lodged by Members

Due date – Wednesday 11 September 2013.

Yours sincerely,

Chris Hartcher MP



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Minister for Resources and Energy
Special Minister of State and
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**QUESTIONS TAKEN ON NOTICE RELATING TO THE PORTFOLIO OF RESOURCES & ENERGY, SPECIAL MINISTER OF STATE, MINISTER FOR THE CENTRAL COAST
16 AUGUST 2013 9.00am – 1.00 pm**

Question from The Hon. Steve Whan MLC

QUESTION 1

The Hon. STEVE WHAN: Minister, do you think that the \$506 per year in State Government dividends is meeting the commitment that the Liberal Party made in opposition that it would not be gouging from consumers?

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: Absolutely, because unlike the previous Government we do not believe in gouging consumers. Mr Whan, I know that you were not the Minister for energy, but you were a Minister in the Cabinet which ripped billions out of the system and transferred State debt onto the electricity system when it was not actually incurred by the electricity system. You were a party to all of those decisions. Unlike your Government, we are not interested in gouging customers.

The Hon. STEVE WHAN: Since you have mentioned it, will you update the Committee on the level of debt held by each of the State's energy transmission companies?

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: I am happy to supply that information on notice.

ANSWER

Details regarding debt levels held by each of the State's energy transmission companies can be found in annual reports and in the budget papers.

Questions from The Hon. Greg Donnelly

QUESTION 2

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: How many social housing units on the Central Coast have been funded in whole or in part by the State Government since coming to office? Do you have any idea about that?

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: The Central Coast has developed, in line with what you say, a Regional Homeless Action Plan.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: My question was about the number of units.

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: What I would like to do is to take—can I just get an understanding of your question in specific terms? Are you asking about the number of public housing units or commercial—

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Public housing units funded in whole or in part since March 2011.

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: Since 26 March 2011 to 30 June? What would your cut-off date be?

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: The end of the last financial year?

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: I am advised that the Land and Housing Corporation has developed 18 community housing dwellings for vulnerable clients—it is providing \$4 million in this budget year, and the Aboriginal Housing Office has paid \$400,000 for the delivery of dwellings for Aboriginal people. As far as the Gosford—

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Minister, my question was quite specific. I have nominated Terrigal, for example, an electorate with which you would be familiar.

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: I would hope so.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: There have been zero units built in Terrigal from March 2011 to January 2013. I would appreciate the extra bit of information you will give me through to the end of the last financial year. So there were no units built, funded either in whole or in part by the State Government, in the electorate of Terrigal. It seems to me that if there are no units built in one of the electorates on the Central Coast then the Government really does not have its eye on the ball with what is a very serious problem on the Central Coast.

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: I could not agree more that homelessness is a serious issue. In fact I have been taking an ongoing interest in the issue for many years. What you said about the Terrigal electorate is quite correct. Terrigal electorate does have a number of public housing units but they are historic; there are no new ones. Terrigal electorate is built out. There are no new land releases. It is only a small electorate now. It is fairly high density. There are high land prices, so it is simply unaffordable. It would be a misallocation of public housing money to be buying where there are very high land costs when there are other electorates on the Central Coast where land costs are a lot lower. So, for that reason, Terrigal electorate is not suitable for future public housing allocation—even though, as I say, it does contain a reasonable amount of public housing allocation. In

respect of Wyong, The Entrance and Gosford, I will get you the up-to-date figures. I will take that question on notice.

ANSWER

This question should be referred to the Minister for Family and Community Services.

QUESTION 3

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Thank you. I am not asking you to breach any Cabinet-in-confidence discussions, but have you raised the issue of emergency housing on the Central Coast with the Minister?

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: No, I think my discussions have largely been with the existing service providers. To carry it forward, I have indicated to them my support for future financial allocation to address the issue. I have written to either the Minister or the Treasurer to secure future financial assistance.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Will you provide us with a copy of that correspondence?

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: I think that is probably part of the Cabinet process.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: You might like to check, because it may not be. I would be grateful for that because the stakeholder groups are very interested in this matter.

ANSWER

As Minister for the Central Coast I make representations on a number of issues to Ministers as is appropriate.

QUESTION 4

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Mr Blackman, will you inform the Committee of specific projects or initiatives that have been spoken about in your office and in the community to tackle youth unemployment on the Central Coast?

Mr BLACKMAN: Within my office and within the government agencies that I talk to in both councils youth unemployment or unemployment generally—

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: I am particularly discussing youth unemployment.

Mr BLACKMAN: The discussions we have had have been about unemployment in general, but a particular initiative that we have significant input into is the Regional Economic Development and Employment Strategy. That is a joint initiative on the Central Coast between Regional Development Australia, the two councils and the State Government to promote economic development on the coast.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: What about youth unemployment specifically?

Mr BLACKMAN: It is a wideranging strategy. We cannot just pick it out and say it is for youth unemployment. But that strategy looks at promoting economic development, which generates jobs.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: There are no programs targeted at the unemployment experienced by youth on the Central Coast?

Mr BLACKMAN: Youth unemployment has a particular focus on addressing educational shortcomings. If you provide appropriate education levels and skill levels for youth they have a much better chance of getting into employment. The Regional Action Plan is focused on improving educational attainment levels. There are programs rolled out through the Department of Education. There are also a range of non-government organisations—

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Will you provide a list of those programs on notice?

Mr BLACKMAN: We can, yes.

ANSWER

The Central Coast Regional Action Plan contains education enhancement and skills development actions which are targeted to:

"engage young people in education and help their transition to further education and employment."

These actions are detailed in the Regional Action Plan available online at <http://www.2021.nsw.gov.au/regions/central-coast>